

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**Please cancel Claims 1-17 after adding claims 18-41 set forth below:**

1.-17. (Canceled)

18. (New) A system for performing a fixation procedure at a spinal location within a patient, comprising:

at least two fasteners adapted to be fixed to two adjacent vertebrae; and

an elongate body having a proximal end and a distal end and defining a length between the proximal and distal ends such that the proximal end can be positioned outside the patient and the distal end can be positioned inside the patient adjacent the spinal location, the elongate body including a passage extending between the proximal and distal ends sized to permit passage of the at least two fasteners therethrough;

wherein the elongate body is actuatable between a first configuration sized for insertion into the patient and a second configuration wherein the cross-sectional area of said passage at a first location is greater than the cross-sectional area of said passage at a second location, wherein the first location is distal to the second location; and

19. (New) The system of Claim 18, wherein the first location is at the distal end of the elongate body.

20. (New) The system of Claim 18, wherein a distal portion of the elongate body is expandable.

21. (New) The system of Claim 18, wherein the elongate body comprises a first tubular portion and a second expandable portion.

22. (New) The system of Claim 18, wherein the at least two fasteners are threaded.

23. (New) The system of Claim 18, wherein the at least two fasteners comprise pedicle screws.

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24. (New) The system of Claim 18, further comprising a fixation element sized to pass through the passage of the elongate body and configured to engage the at least two fasteners.

25. (New) The system of Claim 24, wherein the fixation element comprises a rod.

26. (New) The system of Claim 18, further comprising an endoscope adapted to be held relative to the elongate body.

27. (New) A system for performing a fixation procedure at or near the spine of a patient, said system comprising:

an access device adapted to define a passage from a location outside of the patient to a location at or near the spine of the patient, the access device being at least partially actuatable between a first configuration and a second configuration, wherein the passage of the access device in the second configuration has a cross-sectional area at a first location that is greater than the cross-sectional area of said passage at a second location, wherein the first location is distal to the second location; and

a vertebral fixation assembly configured to fix two adjacent vertebrae, the vertebral fixation assembly adapted to be delivered through the passage of the access device.

28. (New) The system of Claim 27, wherein the vertebral fixation assembly comprises a plurality of vertebral screws.

29. (New) The system of Claim 28, wherein the vertebral fixation assembly further comprises a fastener adapted to engage each of the vertebral screws.

30. (New) The system of Claim 29, wherein the fastener is a rod.

31. (New) The system of Claim 27, further comprising a viewing device adapted to be held relative to the access device.

32. (New) The system of Claim 27, wherein the access device includes a distal portion that is expandable.

33. (New) A system for performing a fixation procedure at a spinal location within a patient, said device comprising:

an access device having a proximal end and a distal end and a length defined between the proximal and distal ends such that the proximal end can be positioned outside the patient and the distal end can be positioned inside the patient adjacent the spinal location, wherein the access device includes a passage extending there through, the access device being expandable from a first configuration to a second configuration, wherein the passage of the access device in the second configuration has a cross-sectional area at the distal end of the device that is greater than a cross-sectional area at the proximal end of the device, said passage being sized for delivery of instruments to perform the procedure at the spinal location; and

at least two threaded fasteners sized for delivery through said passage at least when the access device is in its second configuration, the fasteners being configured to be fixed to adjacent vertebrae..

34. (New) The system of Claim 33, wherein the shape of the access device when expanded is at least partially conical.

35. (New) The system of Claim 33, wherein the access device comprises a first tubular portion and a second expandable portion.

36. (New) The system of Claim 33, wherein the at least two threaded fasteners comprise pedicle screws.

37. (New) The system of Claim 33, further comprising a fixation element sized for delivery through the passage of the access device.

38. (New) The system of Claim 37, wherein the fixation element comprises a rod adapted to engage said at least two threaded fasteners.

39. (New) The system of Claim 37, further comprising a locking member adapted to hold the fixation element relative to the threaded fasteners.

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40. **(New)** The system of Claim 33, wherein the threaded fasteners include a convex engagement surface at a proximal end thereof.

41. **(New)** The system of Claim 40, further comprising a washer adapted to engage the convex engagement surface of the threaded fasteners.